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Leaves of Healing

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The Basis of Fellowship in the Christian Catholic Church

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PART 1

FIRST —

That we recognize the infallible inspiration and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice.

SECOND —

That we recognize that no persons can be members of the Church who have not repented of their sins and have not trusted in Christ for salvation.

THIRD —

That such persons must also be able to make a good profession, and declare that they do know, in their hearts, that they have truly repented, and are truly trusting in Christ, and have the witness, in assurance, of the Holy Spirit.

FOURTH —

That all other questions of every kind shall be held to be matters of opinion and not matters that are essential to Church unity.

That we recognize the infallible inspiration and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice.

One of the basic doctrines that unite evangelical churches and organizations is their belief that the Bible is God's Inspired Word — His revelation to mankind — and as such is the supreme authority for faith and practice. The statements of faith concerning the Bible may be worded differently, but basically they mean the same thing.

The National Association of Evangelicals' doctrinal statement

reads: *We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.*

The Evangelical Free Church statement reads: *We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the Inspired Word of God, without error in the original manuscripts, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority of all Christian faith and life.*

The Directory for Baptist Churches states: *The Bible is a Divine Revelation given of God to men, and is a complete and infallible guide and standard of authority in all matters of religion and morals; whatever it teaches is to be believed, and whatever it commands is to be obeyed; whatever it*

commends is to be accepted as both right and useful; whatever it condemns is to be avoided as both wrong and hurtful; but what it neither commands nor teaches is not to be imposed on the conscience as of religious obligation.

We might ask, Why do evangelicals place so much emphasis on the Bible in their doctrinal statements? It is because the Bible is God's revelation to man. To depart from God's authoritative revelation is to set up ourselves, or others as the authority. This must end in confusion and despair. Yet such confusion seems to be the intellectual pursuit on the secular university classrooms, and in liberal theological seminaries.

Miller Burrows, of Yale University, summarizes the typical modern viewpoint: *The Bible is full of things which to an intelligent educated person of today are either quite incredible, or at best highly questionable . . . The protracted struggle of theology to defend the inerrancy of the Bible against the findings of astronomy, geology and biology has been a series of retreats ending in a defeat which has led all wise theologians to move to a better position.* ("HIS" magazine, Jan. 1966, art. CHRIST AND SCRIPTURE BY Kenneth Kantzer.)

In view of the serious charges against the Bible as being the inerrant Word of God, it is important for us to consider the basis for our faith in it. Much study and many books have been written on this subject one of the more important being B. B. Warfield's scholarly 400 page book, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. However, of all that can be said about the Bible, the most important question is not, "What do you think of the Bible?" but "What do you think of Christ?" If we acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Divine Savior and Lord, we accept Him as the final authority for faith and life.

Of all Christ's teaching, none is more clear and definite than that which He gave concerning the Bible as the Word of God. Consider the following statements of Christ:

Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:18).

And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free. And ye suffer (permit) him no more to do ought (anything) for his father or his mother; Making the Word of God of none effect . . . Mark 7:9-13

And He answered, and said unto them, My mother and My brethren are these who hear the Word of God, and do it (Luke 8:21).

Then He (Jesus) said unto them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! (Luke 24:25).

. . . the Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35b).

Jesus had a high view of the Old Testament Scriptures. He regarded them as God's Word to be believed and obeyed. Our relationship to Him is dependent on this, as He said, *My mother and my brethren are these who hear the Word of God, and do it (Luke 8:21).*

The Bible is a unique book in that it is the product of the human and the Divine. As Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man — mysteriously brought together in the incarnation, so the Word of God is always at one and the same time the product of man and the authoritative revelation of God. Whether spoken in figurative or poetic language or as a narrative, it is still God's Word.

A large portion of the Bible is a narrative of facts which any ordinary mind might have gathered and put into written form, as indicated in the preface to Luke and Acts. The authors were probably not even aware that they were writing under Divine inspiration, yet the product is Divine revelation.

The human element is also noticeable in the style and diction of the sacred writers. Nor is there rea-

son to suppose that the normal use of their particular modes of expression, or natural facilities were hindered under inspiration. In studying the Gospels comparatively you will notice that each writer expresses the words and deeds of Jesus somewhat differently. God did not dictate the words to these writers nor superimpose a distinct style or mode of expression on them.

Each Gospel writer wrote his gospel between thirty to seventy years after the death of Christ. Each wrote to a different group and possibly for different purposes. All of the writers wrote in Greek the words that Jesus spoke in Aramaic. Yet, under the supervision and inspiration of the Holy Spirit what was written is God's truth despite seeming contradiction.

How an apparent contradiction can be true is illustrated by Dr. Kenneth Kantzer who learned from two sources of the death of a friend's mother. One said she was hit by a bus and killed. The other said she was killed in a car accident. Both sources seemed reliable. Later, he learned that she had been hit by a bus and injured. She was put into a car and rushed to the hospital. On the way the car was involved in an accident. She was thrown out of the car and killed instantly.

While Scripture is the product of men, it is also declared to be God-breathed.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Timothy 3:16-17).

There are many reasons we could give for stating in our Basis of Fellowship — *That we recognize the infallible inspiration and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice.* However, we need no other than that we accept Jesus Christ as God's Son and our Savior and Lord, and we follow His example, and obey His command.

PART 2

That we recognize that no persons can be members of the Church who have not repented

of their sins and have not trusted in Christ for Salvation.

In order for us to understand why no persons can be members of the Church who have not repented of their sins and trusted Christ for salvation, we must first understand the nature and purpose of the Church as given us in the New Testament.

The word most frequently translated *church* in the New Testament is the Greek word, *ecclesia* which is taken from two words *ek* which means "from" or "out of" and the word *kaleo* meaning "to call". It denotes a company or assembly of persons called out, selected, and separated from a larger company.

In I Corinthians 1:2 Paul uses the word in a way it is most commonly used in the New Testament.

Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called (to be) saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's.

Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth, was addressing a group or body of believers in Christ, called saints (though obviously they were not very saintly) *sanctified in Christ Jesus*, namely, set apart for God, separated from the world (or so was their calling). They were under the authority of Scripture and of the apostles and elders. They observed the ordinances (sacraments) of baptism and the Lord's Supper, though their observance did need correcting. (I Corinthians 11:27-30).

Of the 110 instances in which the word *ecclesia* is rendered *church* in the New Testament, over 90 refer similarly to the above, that is, a local body of believers or company of disciples meeting in a given place for a given purpose. The word, *ecclesia*, is also used a few times in the New Testament in a general sense referring to all believers at all times in history, (the church universal) as *Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.*

From its use in Scripture, we could conclude that a church may be defined as follows: A company or group of people who have repented of their sins, and have trusted Christ for Salvation, and have been baptized upon their profession

of faith (Acts 2:38-41), and have united for worship, instruction, the observance of the Christian ordinances (sacraments) (Acts 2:42), under the leadership of apostles or elders, and under the authority of the Word of God (Acts 2:42).

The church is sometimes referred to in Scriptures in figurative language for the purpose of making more clear its nature and purpose. In Ephesians 1:22, 23, the Church is likened to a body under the authority of its head.

And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

As the body has many parts in relation to each other and all submissive to the head, so in the church there exists an intimate relationship to each other and all in submission to the authority of Christ. Submission to Christ naturally takes for granted repentance and faith in Christ.

In Ephesians 5:23-32 the relationship between Christ and the Church is likened to that existing between husband and wife with the husband the head of the wife and the home. It is a relationship based on love and commitment. Christ is committed to the Church and the Church committed and submissive to Christ. As a marriage is a public commitment, solemnized before witnesses, so becoming a part of Christ's Church is a public commitment. As Christ publically identified Himself with sinners on the cross, so believers publically identify themselves with Christ and His Church in baptism. Though there are some who would like to remain as secret disciples as indicated in John 12:42-43, yet it is difficult to see how one can be a true disciple without public confession of Christ, see Romans 10:9,10.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto Salvation.

Another figure of speech likens the Church to a temple as a dwell-

ing place for God by His Spirit. This is spoken of in I Corinthians 3:9-17 and Ephesians 2:22. In this picture is seen the intimate relationship of the building materials (the members of the Church) all fit together for the glory of God, and all built on Christ, the Foundation Stone. See also I Peter 2:4-10. As stones or other building material for a temple would be carefully selected and put together, so members of the Church have been chosen of God and separated (in attitude and in relationship with Christ — not separated geographically) from the world.

As the character, beauty, and strength of a building depends on the materials used and the way they are put together, so the character and strength of a church depends on the quality of its membership and the way they are brought together into an organization. It is obvious that a local church can never be perfect as no individual member is perfect.

As a church is a voluntary society, no one can be forced to join, nor can anyone demand membership. However, once a person becomes a Christian, he is exhorted in Scripture to unite in a positive and regular way for worship, fellowship, instruction, observance of the Lord's Supper and service. This is especially true as the church is the only divinely organized society on earth.

For a church to remain true to its nature and purpose, a Biblical standard of discipline must be maintained including the basic requirements for membership, and especially that of repentance of sin and trusting solely in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord for Salvation from sin. However, it is admitted that as we are human and unable to look at the heart, we must receive those desiring fellowship on their public profession of faith in Christ, knowing that only the Lord "knows those who are His."

In recognition of the purpose and nature of the Church and from the clear teachings of Christ and the apostles we must therefore state, as we do in our second point of our Basis of Fellowship —

That we recognize that no persons can be members of the Church who have not repented of their sins and have not trusted in Christ for Salvation.

Our Citizenship Is In Heaven

Carl Q. Lee

The word *citizenship* is not unfamiliar to us. We use it with frequency, we use it with a measure of understanding, but seldom do we take time to give it any real analysis, as to what it means in terms of a relationship with others, with the government, or of our responsibility in action and reaction.

First, it implies an orderly compliance to authority that we call government. It implies that the rules and regulations of that government are recognized as right and good. As citizens of the United States these rules and regulations are fundamentally those ordained by ourselves, because in our right to vote we inherently govern ourselves. We elect men of our choice to pass our laws, to pass the regulations and edicts by which we conduct the affairs of this nation, and by which we live with each other as citizens of the same country. Part of citizenship is a compliance with the rules and regulations of government.

Secular Citizenship and Christian Responsibility

We have had some revolutionary ideas presented in the past few decades where it has been contended that if laws are bad (by whose judgement those laws are bad is a moot point) we have the right to disobey them. We have in places seen civil disobedience, and we have seen that civil disobedience incite to riot. We have seen it do a great many things that are contrary to the orderly onworking and ongoing of a nation's business.

I think that it behooves us as Christians once again to give a very careful study of the 13th chapter of Romans, and come to some better understanding of what Christian citizenship in a nation requires. As part of its total application to the individual it calls for loyalty to the government with which we have citizenship. When the government asks for our support and perhaps even our lives, the loyalties of citizenship demand that we give them.

This on first blush may sound rather harsh, but the fact remains that we have the privilege of speaking what is on our minds; we have the right of free assemblies to attend the House of God without worry of interference, with full freedom, and that freedom, that liberty, has been purchased by men who were willing to give their lives and fortunes that we might have these freedoms.

The responsibilities of citizenship demand that we take an active part in the nation's affairs. I mentioned the right to vote. Citizenship requires that we go to the polls when the opportunity affords and vote. Citizenship requires that we take part in the government of our nation, and certainly it is vital that we exercise the right of franchise.

We must, however, keep in mind that above all else our citizenship is in heaven. I wonder if we realize that all of the implications of citizenship in this nation lie strong and sure in the fact of our heavenly citizenship.

The word *citizenship* implies certain things, one of which is an orderly compliance with authority. What is our authority? Our authority is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is expressed to us in Holy Scripture. Those of us who have claimed Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord attest in that proclamation that we are in compliance with the authority that we believe in as God. Very frequently that is interpreted in the minds of some who have entered into the kingdom, and taken out their citizenship in the kingdom, as a great set of rules, regulations and edicts that are issued to us out of God's Word. We speak of the Ten Commandments, of the Law of Moses, the Sermon on the Mount, but the King one day said, *I give you a new commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you.* There are other commandments that go along with that, other explanations of that commandment that should ring in our hearts as Christians, "All the law

and all the prophets are fulfilled in this one thing, that ye love one another. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Divine Citizenship and The Responsibility of Love

We cannot love on command, but we can respond. It is not that we should love God, but that we should understand and know that He first loved us. In this we will demonstrate our orderly compliance with the Authority under Whose benign and loving hand we have citizenship in heaven. To love one another as He loved us is loyalty to the government, the head and to the system. We are part of that system.

Having agreed with Paul that our citizenship is in heaven from whence we wait for our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, how far does our participation go? There are certain things God recognizes. He knows that we live in a system here on earth that requires that a man labor to earn his bread, to earn those things that he has need of for himself and his family. But as part of His kingdom, and as a part of our citizenship God has said, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." He has also said, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Our citizenship in heaven certainly has privileges and blessings that are beyond our accounting. We can fall upon our knees figuratively or literally and say, *Our Father Who art in heaven!* How humble and how simple those words are. But we are calling upon the Lord God Who made the heavens and the earth and all that in them is: Who set the stars in their motion, created time and space, Who is eternal Himself, Who is God.

Have you ever stopped to consider the privilege of prayer? We are so quick to say, "O God I need help!" And this One Who said, *Let there be light: and there was light.* Who put the land in its place, the seas in their places, the sun, the moon, the stars in their place, He listens. What a privilege it is to pray! What a privilege to know that He hears, He listens and He answers! What a privilege to know that when we don't know how to pray as we should that God Himself in the Person of the Holy Spirit is here before the Almighty throne making intercessions for us with groanings that cannot be uttered!

Our Divine Citizenship Supports Our Earthly Citizenship

Let us examine our lives and minds and hearts not only in terms of our citizenship in this nation, but of that primary citizenship that we profess to be in heaven. It is a blessed thing beyond my capacity to describe, and its privileges are beyond counting. Have we walked and conducted ourselves as heavenly citizens? There is one thing for sure, beloved, if our citizenship in heaven is correct and right and good, and functioning under the grace of God, and by the grace of God, our citizenship here in these United States will take care of itself. Both are blessed. No nation, no land on earth has ever been blessed as this nation has been blessed. It is time that every citizen of this country turns his face heavenward and says, "Thanks be to God they are your gifts!" And God be merciful to us for we have sinned and violated those gifts.

Let us turn our faces to God and say, "O Lord! there came a day when I acknowledged Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and I became a citizen of heaven. I have not walked the way I should. But thanks be to God I can come to you once again and say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' and know that the forgiveness of God is continuous".

I cannot close without adding this one word. There may be those reading this sermon who have not accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. If you want to know the joy of heavenly citizenship, if you want to know what it means to have access to the King of kings, and Lord of lords, fall down upon

your knees and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" and by faith accept the death of Jesus of Nazareth for your sins. Accept by faith

the fact that He rose again from the dead for your justification, and then know that your citizenship will be recorded in heaven.

Like a Tree

Earl L. Minton

Of all God's creation on our planet trees are some of the most beautiful and the most useful. Can you think what life would be like without the benefit of trees? Our lives are enriched by the beauty of the blossoms of the dogwood, peach, cherry or crab apple in springtime. In Jamaica and other tropical climates we so enjoyed the poinciana and the palm trees. Each tree has its own beauty whether it be the giant redwood of California, the aspen of Colorado, or the oak of the midwest. Trees are also useful for food, for building, for furniture, for paper, for synthetics for clothing and other products. They are essential for wildlife, and soil conservation. Many places would become desert if it were not for the large amounts of evaporation through the leaves of trees. God has created over 50,000 different varieties of trees for us to enjoy. No two trees are alike and each has a God-given purpose.

A tree is subject to many dangers from without such as fires, wind, lightning, drought, insects and man in his indiscriminate use. However, its greatest enemy is disease which works from within.

In many ways man is like a tree, though vastly more important, being made in the image of God. Men differ one from another, and God has a purpose for each. Man too has enemies. As trees need legislative protection so there are laws for the protection of people from dangers and from exploitation by others. There are health laws governing food and drugs; laws governing vehicles regulating their use and speed; labor laws and many other laws for our protection.

As the tree is in danger from high winds so is man from the winds of temptation. Wind is good for a tree. Its action in some way causes the roots to spread wide and deep in

order that it may stand against the rocking motion caused by the wind. Temptation in God's will is good, being necessary for the development of character.

One of the great areas of temptation is in our personal relationships. At school, or in a place of work we often have contacts with the same people day after day. Sometimes we react negatively and find ourselves becoming scornful, bitter, jealous or hateful toward certain individuals. God permits these individuals in our lives to reveal our weakness, to show us how unlike Christ we are, and realize our need of Christ for His grace and love and patience in dealing with others.

There are also those to whom we react positively and develop friendships. When a friendship evolves out of mutual respect and admiration for the qualities of another this is beautiful. But there are also inherent dangers. For instance, a friendship between two members of the same sex can become exclusive. We can begin to spend too much time with one person and become possessive and neglect others. Or in a friendship between a Christian and nonchristian of the opposite sex an affection can develop toward marriage out of the will of God. It can also develop between two married people of the opposite sex where they gradually become more and more involved in an emotional attachment and affection which could eventually result in divorce. Such relationships must be broken off. Jesus said, *If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out . . .* Drastic action is necessary, but blessing results in doing the will of God.

We have all observed fallen trees or tree limbs after fierce winds. Often we find that the tree did not fall due only to the strength of the wind, but because it was unprotected, or had not developed a suffi-

ent root system to withstand the sudden pressure, or had developed an inner weakness from disease or rot. For such the wind was the occasion not the cause of the fall of the tree. To use another metaphor consider Judas who betrayed Jesus with a kiss in the garden. That was not really the time he fell. That was the time his fall was manifest to others. Sin, unconfessed, had been growing within his heart. He became a tool of Satan who entered into him and tempted him to betray the Lord, and he was powerless to resist. God's Word warns us, *Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.*

Consider also Peter who fell at a time of severe temptation even denying his Lord. Failure to watch and pray left him unprepared when temptation came. As with a tree so with man there is a need of prevention to remain strong.

Like a tree mankind also goes through the fire of trials and testings. It is not what happens to a person that finally counts, but what he does after it happens. It's how a person reacts to his or her circumstances that determines whether they are walking with the Lord, or living for self. Jesus Christ experienced the worst that man could do when they nailed Him to the cross. He turned that which was the worst into that which became the greatest blessing for mankind.

How do we react when hurtful remarks are made about us? How do we react to criticism? Those of you who are golfers would understand this illustration. What would it be like out on a golf course without the trials of bunkers or dog legs, of water holes or sand traps? You would go and look for another golf course that would challenge you. God gives to us trials in our life to challenge us, to develop character, to wean us from possessiveness of material things, and that we might experience His grace, His patience and His peace. It is only through trials that we can have a true appreciation of the Cross.

As with a tree man also experiences in his life times of drought. A period of dryness with little enjoyment is natural to life. Sometimes we become subject to our moods, and if we do not feel like being friendly we are snippy. If we don't

feel like work we'll look at television. If we don't feel like going to school we skip out or do something else. Listen to the words of the apostle Paul: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," and "I am under the Cross of Christ." The will of God and not moods must determine our actions. As we bring our moods into subjection to His will there eventually comes the joy of the Lord in our life and blessing to others.

The greatest danger to trees is not that which comes from without, but that which attacks from within. We have seen what has happened to trees in our area stricken with Dutch elm disease. Man also is plagued by disease, the disease of sin. The Bible says, *The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.* What a man is on the inside he in time will reveal on the outside. *Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.* There is only one thing to do with sin,— bring it to the Cross of Christ. Jesus Christ died to give us forgiveness and cleansing. He now lives to make us good. As he died for our sins we are to die to sin. To love God is to hate evil. To yield our bodies to God is to experience His strength for our weakness. Overcoming power is also experienced through study and meditation on God's Word. Jesus said, *Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you.*

The apostle Paul reminds us that "His (God's) power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; goodness, kindness, courtesy, consideration for others (The home is a good place to learn consideration for others). For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Peter 1:3-8).

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful (anxious) in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit (Jeremiah 17: 7,8).

May God help us to seek to grow in grace through the knowledge of His Word!

Immediate Salvation for Thee

John Alexander Dowie

Kind reader, permit me to say a few words to thee concerning thine eternal welfare; and may God, who loves thee, help me.

Thou art immortal, the offspring of the Father of Spirits; and, because He is eternal, so art thou.

On earth, in the visible creation within man's knowledge, there is nothing of such infinite importance as an immortal spirit, such as thou art.

But thy body is mortal, it is of the earth, earthly, and it will die,

decay, and pass away into dust again. There are no exceptions. Look at thy body, touch thy pulse, listen to thy throbbing heart, and say, "Oh, body, thou art warm with life, but thou shalt ere long be cold in death; for the silver cord shall soon be loosed, and thou shalt return to the earth, but my liberated spirit shall return to God who gave it." Then pause, ponder deeply in thy mind and solemn thought, and speak once more, — "But, oh, my spirit, art thou prepared to stand before the great white throne of

gment, shouldest thou be summoned today?"

Kind reader, if thou art unsaved, thou art lost. Hast thou earnestly looked upon the eternity into which thou mayest be ushered at the step? Consider now. "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." Do not delay: for that delay may be fatal. Thy danger is immediate, and, therefore, so is thy need. God has, consequently, provided an immediate salvation. Let me tell thee very simply how thou mayest be immediately saved.

First, *thou must immediately repent*. God's Holy Spirit has already convinced thee that thou art a sinner. Thou dost need a Savior. Turn from thy sin at once, with sincere hatred of all thine evil deeds and thoughts, with sincere sorrow and desire for mercy. Like the dying Israelites, the fiery serpents of sin have, with their deadly venom, poisoned all the streams of thy being. Thou didst nurse these vipers in thy bosom, and gavest them the love thou didst deny to God. Even now, although thou knowest these sins are stinging thee like deathadders, thou art strangely fascinated by their glamour; and, madened with unsatisfied desire, thou art permitting them to coil more firmly around thy soul, and drain thy life away. Dying soul, arouse thee! Look to Him who died to save thee, and thou shalt live.

Second, *thou must immediately believe and pray, believing that God will fulfill His promise to thee*.

God requires thee to believe (1) that He loves thee; (2) that He came in the person of His Son to save thee; (3) that His Son, Jesus the Christ, bore thy sins, thy sorrows, and died for thee; (4) that He rose from the dead and is thine Advocate above, ever ready to intercede for thee, and (5) that, if thou dost truly ask the Father in His name, and dost from thy heart forsake and "confess" thy sin, thou shalt be saved that moment, for it is written (1 John 1:9), "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Do that in simple faith, and thou art saved immediately. Not that *thy* faith saves thee: for faith never saved any one, and yet no

one was ever saved without faith. It is the *grace*, the free love and almighty power of God which saves the sinner who prays in faith; for it is written (Ephesians 2:8), "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Does this seem hard to understand? Let me try to explain it still further. Suppose thou art poor and in great need. One who is kind, and very rich, gives thee a cheque for money covering all thy wants. At the bank thou dost present that cheque in faith, and thy faith is rewarded by getting all thy money. But it was not thy faith which provided the money — no, it was thy kind friend, who had placed it there for thee; it was his grace, so to speak, which answered the demand of thy faith, which believed his written word. So cheques upon the Bank of Infinite Love and Power are given thee, which cover all thy need, at all times. Take this: "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25) Present this now, this very moment, at the Throne of Grace; and thou shalt be saved "immediately," and to the uttermost.

The Gospels, and other portions of the inspired Word, are full of proofs that God saves sinners *immediately*. All His acts of healing were "immediate." The leper who came in faith, was "immediately"

cleansed (see Mark 1:40-42); Peter's wife's mother was "immediately" healed when Jesus touched her (Luke 4:39); the woman who had spent all she had on doctors, after twelve years of weary and increasing suffering, was "immediately" healed when she touched Him with faith (Luke 8:43,44); the man who had lain for thirty-eight years, was "immediately" made whole at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9); the man "above forty years old, and lame from his birth," was healed "in the name of Jesus Christ," at the Beautiful Gate, and "immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength" (Acts 3:1-11), and many others were healed "immediately" of whom thou canst read. And it was thus, too, that Christ forgave penitent sinners, such as the fallen woman who wept at His feet in the Pharisee's house, to whom He there said, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48); and, in the Pearl of Parables, He taught us that the Eternal Father goes forth to meet the returning, sorrowing sinner, and saves him "immediately" and forever.

Kind reader, do not delay until the day of grace be gone, and the day of judgment find thee doomed. He is able; He is willing; and if thou dost perish, it is because thou wilt not be saved. "How shalt *thou* escape, if *thou* dost neglect so great salvation?" How? How? It is the one question which even God cannot answer. How? How?

PARDON THROUGH THE CROSS

In evil long I took delight,
Unaw'd by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight
And stopped my wild career.

I saw One hanging on a tree
In agonies and blood,
Who fixed His languid eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke.

A second look He gave which said,
'I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I died that thou may'st live'.

Thus while His death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue;
Such is the mystery of grace
It seals my pardon too.

With pleasing grief and mournful joy
My spirit now is fill'd,
That I should such a life destroy,
Yet live by Him I killed.

— John Newton

Unto Us A Son Is Given

Carl Q. Lee

The Christmas story is perhaps the most familiar story of all, yet I wonder how thoroughly we recognize the importance of the birth of our Lord. We are aware that in many ways God revealed Himself to those who brought the message of the Old Testament. There were times when God appeared in various manifestations to His servants. We think, for instance, of the appearance to Moses when he stood before the burning bush. We listen to the prophets as they repeatedly say, "The Word of the Lord came unto me." We hear the psalmist say, *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork.* All of these revelations ultimately pointed toward the one great coming event, when God Himself, in the form of a Person, in terms of flesh and blood, would actively participate in human historical events.

Anticipations Of The Messiah

In addition to this underlying movement of Old Testament revelation there were also specific, though dimly understood, anticipations of the Coming One:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Out of this and other intimations of the future men and women in Israel came to look forward to the coming Messiah. However, blinded by human pride, they misunderstood. They anticipated the coming of a great king, a mighty conqueror, who would vindicate their special calling as God's "chosen people" and drive their enemies into the sea. They forgot that Israel had been chosen for the blessing of all families of the earth. They could not see that God's Kingdom could be established only by the suffering love of His Servant:

For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him (Isaiah 53:2).

Salvation for mankind could not possibly come through the mighty hand of a conqueror riding a horse, leading legions, and brandishing a sword. History is full of futile attempts of that kind. However, if redemption were to be effected, if men and women were to be saved, something different, something contrary to human expectations, had to happen.

"O Little Town Of Bethlehem!"

There came a time when a Roman emperor issued an edict and whole families made pilgrimages to the city of their birth. One pair of travelers, unnoticed by the thousands of others who wended their way to various home cities, journeyed from Nazareth to Bethlehem. They were a dedicated pair — Mary and Joseph of Nazareth, of the house of David. Mary had been visited by the angel Gabriel and had been told in the Annunciation of the great role she was to play. She was to bear a son: *Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given.* As they went their way from Nazareth to Bethlehem there must have been joy in their hearts, because they knew the time was coming when that which had been announced to them would be accomplished.

For Mary and Joseph it was an arduous trip on foot and on donkey back. We may suppose it was late in the evening when they arrived at Bethlehem and many travelers presumably had come ahead of them. Picture the scene! We can imagine the innkeeper saying: "My rooms are all taken; I have travelers sleeping in the hallways and on the floor. There is not vacant space of any kind." Finally there came a suggestion (who knows who gave the word?) "There is room in the stable." And so Mary and Joseph wended their way to this homely shelter, the place set apart to house the donkeys and cattle at night. There in the silent hours Messiah came. Not a conquering king. Not a man riding a white horse leading legions to drive the enemies into the sea. Rather, a babe! This is the way God came into the tragic hu-

man situation to bring about the redemption of mankind. Born of the kingly line of David, 'tis true. But if He had been born in a king's household, if He had been born with all the trappings of royalty about Him, of what meaning would His birth have been to you or me, or to those who are even less fortunate? He came into surroundings that were the humblest — a stable, a manger, the habitat of the lowing cattle, the quietly munching donkey. Yes, these were the humble surroundings into which the King of kings and Lord of lords was born. Because He came not just to a select few, not alone to those who had advantage and wealth and opportunity, but to all mankind, this was the way the Son of God was given to us.

"He Hath Visited And Redeemed His People!"

On this quiet happening — the birth of a child — the whole course of history hinged. From that point on things were never the same. Here a new era began. Here is where God in Person, in the form of flesh and blood came into this world to minister to us at the point of our deepest departure from Him, at the lowest point of our degradation. He is a God Who knows, not just because He is God, but because as God He came to us where we are. Thus He knows because He has endured and walked every stony pathway that we walk, though without sin. He came to us because He loved us with a love beyond measure. Very God came from heaven itself to that stable to take upon Himself the form of a man in order to save us. That stable was a premonition of the ultimate place God went for us that we might be certain of His forgiving love — *the Cross of Calvary*. There are many sentimental things said about the Babe of Bethlehem. But it is at Calvary that we learn the meaning of Christmas. It is at the Cross that we understand what is meant by the words *Unto us a Son is given*.

Why did He come all this way? Why did He come as a babe to Bethlehem? Why did He endure the cross? Because *God so loved the world*. It was out of love that that child grew and endured all the temptations to which we are subjected. It was He Who arose again from the dead, and it is He Who is coming again!